

Collier Enterprises statement on Rural Lands West application
January 7, 2019

Collier Enterprises is withdrawing its Rural Lands West SRA application for a new town. Here's why.

After several years of planning, three years of navigating the Collier County permitting process, and investing millions of dollars in the Rural Lands West (RLW) development — a proposed new Town in eastern Collier County – it is with profound disappointment that Collier Enterprises has decided to withdraw the County application for RLW.

Collier Enterprises is dedicated to the responsible stewardship of the land and smart growth, so why the changing course?

The answer is simple: Bureaucracy and economic overreach by Collier County management.

The RLW Town concept would have generated \$270 million in various impact fees to Collier County, plus another \$20 million in shared Collier County infrastructure improvements – all this in addition to setting aside over 12,500 acres of environmentally valuable preserve land at no cost to taxpayers.

Instead, Collier County management requested an additional \$50 million above and beyond RLW's customary fair share of contributions to county infrastructure. The County also imposed limited access to the public roadways for retail development within the project, severely limiting its viability. This requirement, along with suggested plan alternatives, had a significant detrimental impact on the economic viability of the land planned for regional retail and employment uses, and therefore reduced the economic viability of the overall town.

This has been a frustrating process for Collier Enterprises. The financial demands and planning encumbrances from County staff are not consistent with other permit applications moving through the process or recently completed in Collier County. Ultimately, the permitting team at Collier Enterprises was left with no choice but to re-examine the viability of the project and consider alternatives.

This is an unfortunate outcome for Collier County for a number of reasons, including the net loss of \$29 million in annual tax revenue, the loss of over \$200 million in impact fees, the loss of 6,000 new job opportunities, the elimination of regional goods and services, and – in a County that says it is committed to creating workforce housing – the diminished ability to provide new, moderately priced homes.

Despite this disappointing experience with the County, Collier Enterprises will continue to explore all options for pursuing investment and growth opportunities, including options outside of Collier County. In fact, Collier Enterprises recently redirected over \$100 million in new real estate investment outside of Collier County. Collier Enterprises would prefer to continue investing in Collier County, and intends to file a SRA Village application to further explore this concept with the County.

Collier Enterprises remains committed to the long-term benefits of the proposed Habitat Conservation Plan and the Rural Lands Stewardship Program, as well as helping to meet Collier County's future growth demands while embracing a historic opportunity to work with environmental groups to preserve thousands of acres of environmentally sensitive lands and wildlife habitat.